



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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Contact: Renee Hoffman  
Phone: 919/733-5612

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**GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES STATE NOW OWNS CHIMNEY ROCK PARK**  
*North Carolina Closes on Deal to Add Nearly 1,000 Acres to State Park*

**RALEIGH** - Gov. Mike Easley today announced that the state of North Carolina has closed on the \$24 million purchase of Chimney Rock Park, adding the natural attraction in Rutherford County to a new state park under development in the Hickory Nut Gorge.

"Chimney Rock is a cherished landmark in North Carolina, and this is a key acquisition for the state parks system and land conservation in our state," Easley said. "The state is honored to accept the stewardship of this important natural resource."

Easley announced the state's intention in January to purchase Chimney Rock Park from the Morse family, descendants of the attraction's founder, Lucius B. Morse. The acquisition was funded with a \$15 million appropriation from the General Assembly, \$4.85 million from three state conservation trust funds and \$2.35 million from a private donor.

The transfer of the 996-acre property is accompanied by an agreement under which the Morse family, through its Chimney Rock Company Management LLC, will continue to operate the park through 2009 in a manner similar to its current operation including charging an admission fee, offering special events and staying open on a year-round basis. Beginning in 2008, the state will receive a licensing fee based on a percentage of gross revenues.

During that period, the Division of Parks and Recreation will continue land acquisition efforts and develop a master plan for the larger state park that encompasses Chimney Rock, which is now more than 3,200 acres spanning both sides of the gorge.

"Members of the Morse family have been careful stewards and successful managers of this property for more than 100 years," Easley said. "The state is fortunate to have their help now so that the public can continue to enjoy this attraction while we carefully plan and work toward building a world class state park."

Chimney Rock Park began as a private nature attraction in 1902. Its dominant feature is a 315-foot-tall rock spire that offers 75-mile views. The park also has a nature center and a network of hiking trails leading to unusual geologic features and the 404-foot Hickory Nut Falls.